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News



PVUSD makes another round of cuts

Modified: Friday, Feb 5th, 2010

BY: TODD GUILD

The Pajaro valley Unified School District Board of Trustees on Wednesday made another round of cuts, lopping just more than \$5 million from a district already hemorrhaging from 8 years of cuts.

Taking a hit were elementary school assistant principals, middle school counselors, high school clerks and the district transportation department, among other things.

Class sizes in kindergarten through third grade will increase to 28, and the ranks of school nurses will be reduced.

Left untouched was Watsonville/Aptos Adult Education, which was facing a reduction of \$1.6 million from its general fund, on top of the \$650,000 it took in December.

Several speakers addressed the board, pleading that the adult school be spared.

Board president Libby Wilson stressed that the Wednesday decisions were necessary.

"It's not what we want to do," she said. "But it's the only way to muddle through this."

Wilson, along with superintendent Dorma Baker, said that the district is legally bound to balance the budget. Failing to do so can result in sanctions from the Santa Cruz County Office of Education and from the state.

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Still, trustee Doug Keegan said any cuts will reverberate throughout the district, and that PVUSD has had suffered enough losses.

"I just cannot make another cut to any program in our district, and I would propose that we hold the line and that we stay with the budget we already have and cut nothing until we absolutely have to."

"This is like educational suicide to propose these cuts and I just cannot do it," he continued.

But Hart said if the county office of education receives an unbalanced budget from PVUSD, they could apply sanctions on the district.

Additionally, cuts from the state will likely continue to get worse in the next school year, and further reductions to education will again be necessary, Hart said.

"You do have a fiduciary responsibility to pass this budget," she said.

Willie Yahiro said he supported Keegan's suggestion to wait to make cuts until a better picture of the budget emerges.

However, Keegan's motion failed on a 2-5 vote.

Sandra Nichols suggested a list of reductions she said were aimed at keeping cuts away from education.

"It was aimed at protecting students in the classrooms," she said.

Nichols pointed out that Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger in his recent budget proposal suggested \$1.5 billion in targeted cuts to school administrators, echoing a longstanding refrain from many PVUSD community members to "chop from the top."

"We need to be more protective of students and less protective of administrators," she said.

Among other things, Nichols suggested reducing administrators' \$500-per-month mileage stipend to \$150, which she called a "symbolic change" that will save \$16,500 per year.

Nichols also said the district should eliminate high-ranking administrators' longevity bonuses, which she said will save \$26,500 per year.

"I just don't think we can justify this lavish spending," she said. "This is not going to cause anyone to go home hurting."

Nichols also suggested reducing administrators' salaries.

In the end, it was a proposal by Wilson that passed the muster of the board in a 5-2 vote.

The outcome of the cuts have yet to be determined, and board members said after the meeting that they hope Gov. Schwarzenegger's prediction of an infusion of \$6.5 billion in federal funds will temper the need for cuts.

However, Hart called the possibility that the district will have to lay off staff "inevitable."

State law requires that teachers receive their pink slips by March 15. Classified employees require 45 days' notice.

The meeting was held in the Performing Arts Center at Aptos High School to handle the expected overflow crowd, but the new center was only half full. Unlike previous

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